



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

March 11, 2021

TO: The Honorable Shane Pendergrass
Chair, Health and Government Operations Committee

FROM: Marc Elrich
County Executive

RE: HB 396, Public Health - Overdose and Infectious Disease Prevention Services
Program, Support

House Bill 396 would allow the Maryland Department of Health, in consultation with local health departments, to approve up to six single-site programs throughout the State in areas with high incidence of drug use, where drug users can access a location that is supervised by health care professionals in order to consume pre-obtained drugs; obtain sterile injection supplies and dispose hypodermic needle and syringes; be monitored for potential overdose and receive rescue medication, including naloxone; and receive access or referrals to services such as substance abuse disorder counseling and treatment services. Program sites would be established by hospitals, clinics, substance abuse treatment centers, medical offices, federally qualified health centers, mental health facilities, local health departments, or faith-based organizations. The bill would take effect July 1, 2021 and sunset four years later, on June 30, 2025.

Safe consumption sites such as those provided for by House Bill 396 are well-studied and shown to positively impact public health by reducing the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C,¹ reducing fatal overdose,² facilitating entry into addiction treatment,³ and through addiction treatment support injection cessation.⁴ Because these positive public health outcomes benefit Marylanders struggling with addiction as well as our communities as a whole, I support House Bill 396 and respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report.

¹ Sherman, S., Hunter, K., and S. Rouhani. 2017. Safer drug consumption spaces: a strategy for Baltimore City. The Abell Report, 29(7).

² *Id.*

³ DeBeck, K., Kerr, T., Bird, L., Zhang, R., Marsh, D., Tyndall, M., Montaner, J., and E. Wood. 2011. Injection drug use cessation and use of North America's first medically supervised safer injection facility. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* (113) 172-176.

⁴ *Id.*